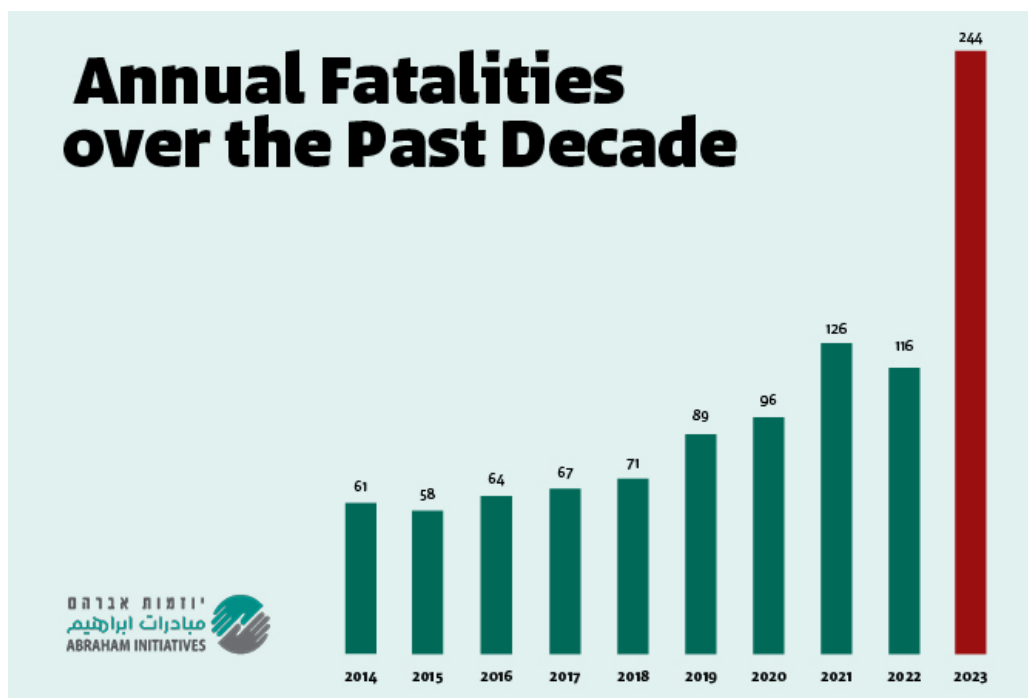


Victims of Violence and Crime in Arab Society in 2023¹

2023 was the bloodiest year in Israel's history in terms of crime and violence in Arab society: 244 Arab citizens lost their lives under circumstances of crime and violence.

The number of fatalities was more than double (2.1 times) that in the previous year, despite a decrease in the number of victims following the outbreak of the Iron Swords War on October 7 (the number of fatalities from October 7 through the end of 2023 was higher than that for the same period in 2022). The significant increase in the total number of fatalities followed a decrease in numbers during 2022 compared to numbers in 2021.

Crime has far-reaching consequences. In addition to the fatalities, there are thousands who have sustained various degrees injury, both physical and psychological. Moreover, crime constitutes an obstacle to economic development and impairs the functioning of local government. This is liable to lead to regression in Arab society after an improvement in economic and social indexes over the past decade.



*The figures for 2014—2017 were provided by the Israel Police

**The figures for 2018—2020 only do not include East Jerusalem

¹ The Monitoring Report on Victims of Violence and Crime is being published this year as Israel is in the midst of an extremely trying period. Like all Israeli citizens, we are in pain and mourning for what is happening. However, as an organization that has been active in this field for many years, we cannot ignore this serious phenomenon.

Threats against Heads of Local Authorities & Municipal Candidates

As the local elections approached, a rise was recorded in threats against heads of local authorities and candidates. Several violent incidents occurred, including shooting attacks, injuries, and even the killing of the Executive Director of Tira Municipality.

Multiple Fatality Events

Three incidents caused particularly high numbers of fatalities: In Yafia and Basmat Tabun, five people were killed in each of the two incidents; in Abu Snan four people were shot and killed, including a candidate in the local elections.

Government Actions to Eradicate Crime

The change of government and the appointment of Minister Ben-Gvir led to the suspension of the Safe Track program in its original format and the de facto cancellation of the program. Attempts were made to curtail budgets intended to fight crime under Government Decision 549. Each of these actions has severely impaired eradication of crime.

Appallingly Low Indictment Rate

Out of 219 incidents (in which 244 people were killed), only 10.5% (23) were resolved. In 2022, 21% of cases were resolved (24), and in 2021 19% (24).

Most Casualties were Victims of Gunshots

Of the 244 fatalities, 215 (88.1%) were killed by gunfire, underscoring the grave problem of illegal weapons in Arab society.

The Rise in the Number of Fatalities

An analysis of the statistics shows that there has been an increase in homicides in all parts of Israel. However, the increase is particularly significant in the north. The main reason for this is the heightened activity of criminal organizations in this region. In addition, the significant actions undertaken by the police under the Bennett-Lapid government to combat the criminal organizations in this region led to struggles for control within the criminal organizations and turf wars between organizations & between factions within the same organization. These conflicts caused numerous fatalities in 2023.

Based on reports from diverse sources, including statements by the Israel Police, media reports, and information from the field, we assessed the background of numerous homicide instances. Our assessment found that over two-thirds of the incidents (71.7%) were due to struggles between criminal organizations or part of family and clan conflicts.

It is important to note in this context that these victims include individuals who were killed in revenge attacks due to these conflicts and their family affiliation, and not because they were involved in criminal activities. Approximately 7.7% of the incidents involved death in brawls or in spontaneous violence, while 4.5% occurred in the context of domestic violence and violence relating to gender and sexual orientation. The background to a significant proportion of the incidents (11.8%) remains unknown.

Key Points for Understanding the Current Reality

Despite worsening organizational erosion in the Israel Police over recent years, the Bennett-Lapid government managed to reverse the upward trend in crime and to formulate an approach for combating the phenomenon, in cooperation with experts, professionals, and leaders of Arab society. The Ministry of Public Security, headed at the time by Omer Bar-Lev, Deputy Minister MK Yoav Segalovich, and Director-General Tomer Lotan, led this undertaking on behalf of the government. Their approach was serious and thorough, and it was evident that uprooting crime was a key priority for the government. By contrast, elements in the current government have attempted to place obstacles in the path of programs introduced as part of Government Decision 549 concerning the uprooting of crime in Arab society.

The Minister of Public Security, together with the Minister for the Development of the Negev and Galilee, have even expressed support for cutting the budget for socioeconomic development in Arab society, which seeks to address the underlying causes of crime and violence.²

All the professionals, researchers, and experts in the field stress the connection between underdevelopment and neglect and the phenomena of violence and crime. Despite this, the present government has modified the emergency Safe Track program introduced by the previous government and left it irrelevant and powerless, to the point that it appears to have been abandoned entirely.

Studies from various countries show that when crime is not adequately addressed, it tends to grow due to inertia, and not necessarily as the result of any significant changes to the circumstances in which they occur.

It is impossible to ignore the fact that the sharpest rise in the number of fatalities occurred after the change of government and after MK Itamar Ben-Gvir assumed the position of Minister of Public Security, which includes ministerial responsibility for the Israel Police. The dramatic increase in crime and in the number of fatalities constitutes a total failure on the part of the government, the minister, and the police and highlights the defective attention to this phenomenon. The struggle against the current level of crime is difficult and challenging and requires the appointment of experienced figures with managerial and integrational capabilities. First and foremost, however, in order to eradicate crime in Arab society there must be a genuine desire to achieve this goal. The conduct of the Ministry of Public Security and its Minister raise serious doubts concerning the presence of such a desire. On the contrary, the Minister is leading a policy approach that marks all Arab citizens of Israel as enemies. His conduct over many years reflects the attitude that Arab lives are worthless and their human rights are conditional at best.

² "Wasserlauf and Ben-Gvir demand new discussion on the development plan for Arab society." *Calcalist* (July 18, 2023); for more details on the underlying causes of crime, see [here](#).

Number of Cases Resolved

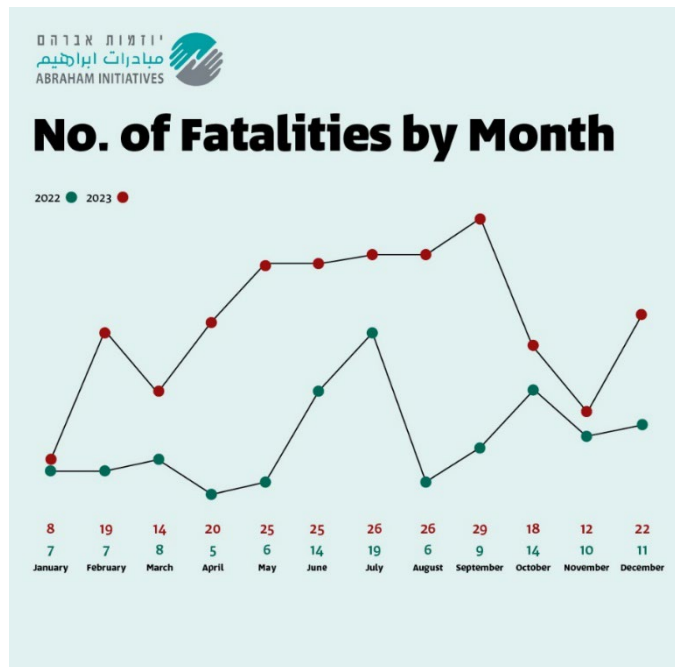
10.5%	219	244
Cases resolved	Violent incidents	Fatalities

In 2023, 244 victims of crime and violence were killed in 219 incidents. To the best of our knowledge, only 23 of these incidents (10.5%) have been resolved. This is very small proportion; the implication is that most of the murderers are still at large. This figure underscores the need to significantly enhance police efforts to uproot crime, as well as the need to strengthen the police so that its capabilities will match the scope and intensity of crime.

Effective enforcement requires detective work, investigation, resolution, and prosecution. These capabilities are not sufficiently well developed in the Israel Police, particularly regarding its interface with Arab society.

No. of Fatalities by Month

The figures show that the monthly number of fatalities rose over the year, reaching a peak of 29 in September. The graph also shows the sharp fall in the number of fatalities since the beginning of the war. Nevertheless, the number of fatalities each month is higher than in the same month last year.



Impact of the War

↓50.8%

Fall in the number of fatalities

Comparison between the number of victims in the two months before Oct. 7 and the two months after

The horrific events of October 7 stunned the entire country. In the two months since that Saturday, a 50.8% decrease was recorded in the number of fatalities in comparison to the two months preceding October 7.

One possible explanation for this is that as soon as the war began, the police presence in Arab communities was expanded significantly, in part due to concerns about possible clashes.

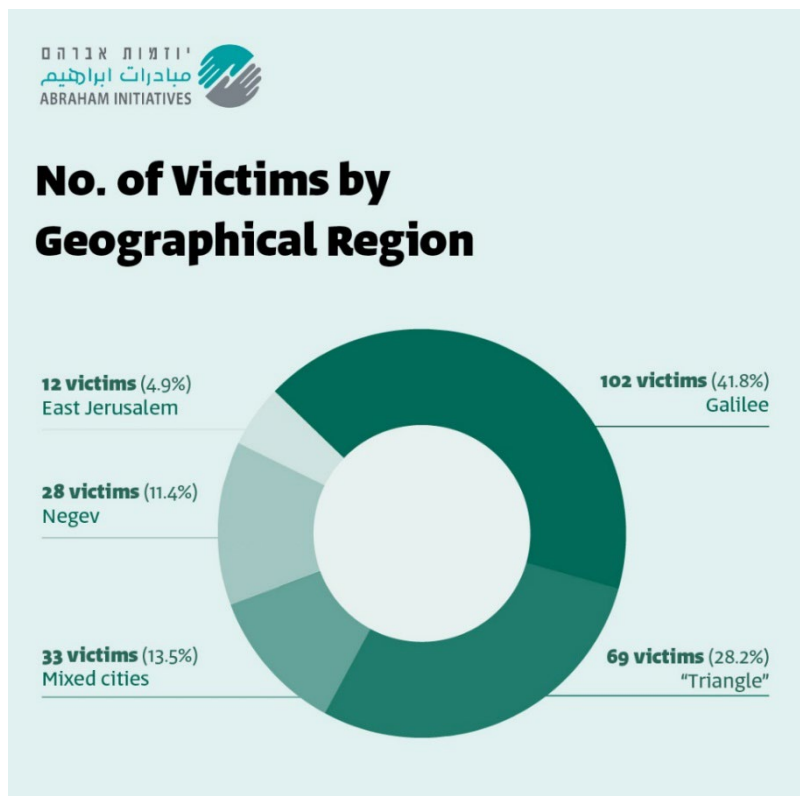
It can also be assumed that the criminal organizations decided to adopt a lower profile and reduce the scope of their activities, both due to concerns about the enhanced police presence and due to fear that the police would adopt a more trigger-happy approach during the emergency. It is also possible that the expanded presence of the defense system in its entirety contributed to a reduction in instances of crime and violence.



No. of Victims by Geographical Region

The largest number of fatalities (102 — 41.8%) this year came from Galilee, followed by the “Triangle” region (69 — 28.2%), the mixed cities (33 — 13.5%), and the Negev (28 — 11.4%).

Proportional to the number of Arab citizens living in each region, the number of fatalities in the Galilee and Negev was below these regions' relative proportion of Arab population.



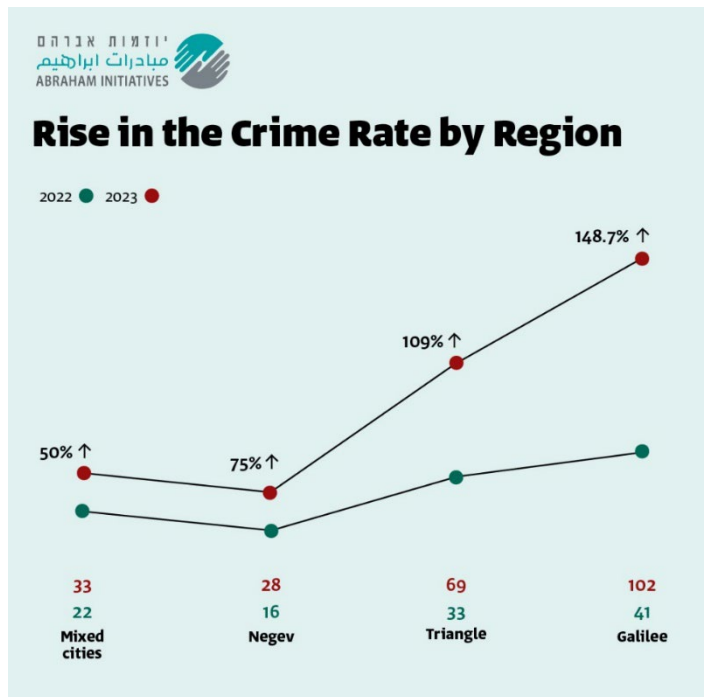
While the proportion of fatalities in the “Triangle” region and the mixed cities was higher than their relative proportion:

Galilee and the Negev are home to 49.9% and 17.5% of Arab citizens, respectively, while the proportion of fatalities in these regions is 41.8% and 11.4%, respectively.

The “Triangle” region and the mixed cities are home to 19.7% and 8.3% of Arab citizens, respectively, while the proportion of fatalities in these regions is 28.2% and 13.5%, respectively.

Rise in the Crime Rate by Region

In 2023, an increase in the crime rate was recorded in all regions. However, the sharpest increase (148.7%) was seen in Galilee. One explanation for this is that in the preceding year, this region was the focus of numerous conflicts between criminal organizations. In the “Triangle” region, the number of fatalities rose by 109% in 2023; in the Bedouin communities of the Negev, a significant rise was also seen in 2023 (75%); while the smallest rise was recorded in the mixed cities (50%).



Victims by Age Group

Age 0—17	Age 18—30	Age 31—40	Age 41—50	Age 51+
12 fatalities (4.9%)	119 fatalities (48.7%)	51 fatalities (20.9%)	35 fatalities (14.3%)	27 fatalities (11%)

As in previous years, the largest proportion (48.7% — 119) of fatalities due to crime and violence were young adults aged 18—30. As the graph shows, all age groups are at risk,

although in general the level of risk declines with age (the exception are minors, who are at the lowest risk of becoming victims).

The Cities with the Most Fatalities



Nazareth and **Lod** recorded the highest number of fatalities among their residents (17 each). Nazareth became a focal point for crime in 2023, and if the surrounding areas are included (Yafia, Kafr Kana, Iksal, Ilut, and Ein Mahal) the figure rises to 28.

Among the mixed cities, **Ramle** (10) and **Haifa** (9) are particularly prominent.

In the south, **Rahat** is prominent: 12 residents of the city lost their lives over 2023 in circumstances of violence and crime. This figure is equal to the number of fatalities among residents of Rahat during the **four** preceding years together (2019–2022).

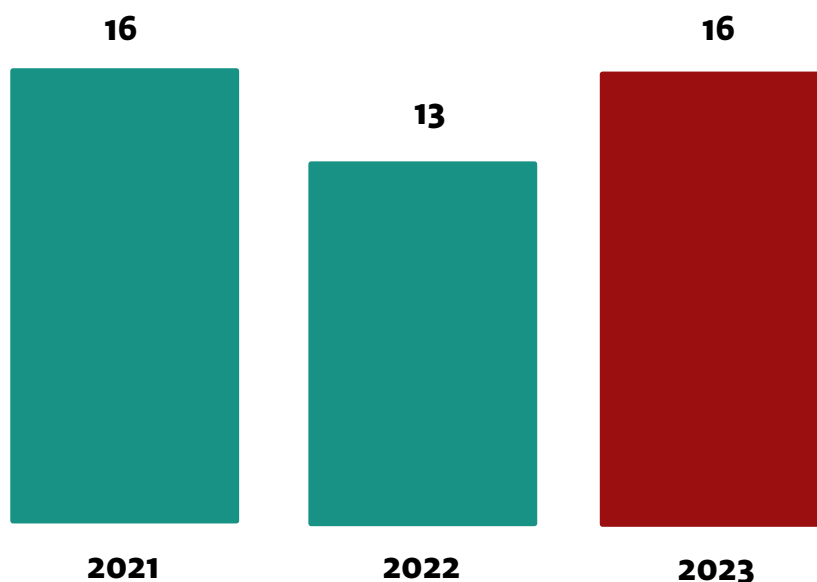
No. of Shooting Victims

88%

Killed by firearms

Of the total fatalities in 2023, 215 (88.1%) were shot to death, highlighting the serious problem of illegal weapons. It is still too easy to obtain firearms in Arab society. In light of the wave of armament occurring in Israeli society, it can be anticipated that the number of stolen and illegal firearms will rise. It is estimated that there are already thousands of illegal firearms, and these are used mainly against Arab citizens.

No. of Female Fatalities due to Violence and Crime, by Year



The statistics show that the number of female fatalities has remained relatively stable over recent years; the dramatic rise in the total number of fatalities did not have a significant impact on the number of female victims. Reports suggest that there has been an increase in recent years in the number of women killed in the context of conflicts between criminal organizations and revenge killings. The other female victims included here were usually killed in the context of domestic violence.

Policy Recommendations

- 1 Return the eradication of violence and crime in Arab society as a top priority of the government.
- 2 Continued implementation in full of Government Decisions 549 and 550 to address the underlying causes of crime.
- 3 Replace Minister Ben-Gvir with a minister capable of tackling the challenge of eradicating crime and gain broad public legitimacy, particularly in the Arab public.
- 4 The Safe Track program for uprooting crime should be reinstated in its original format, which proved effective. Actions and resources devoted to the struggle against crime should be integrated across all government ministries.
- 5 As part of this process, the head of the program should maintain regular contact with the heads of Arab local authorities and the leadership of Arab society.
- 6 The police presence in the Arab communities should be enhanced, particularly in areas particularly affected by crime.
- 7 The Israel Police, as the civilian police force, should be strengthened in the community, intelligence, and investigative spheres. The personnel problem in the police should be solved; additional Arabic-speaking detectives and investigators should be recruited, including Arabic-speaking female investigators in the field of domestic violence; and the cultural capacity of police personnel as a whole should be strengthened, particularly among personnel involved in Arab society.
- 8 Actions to enhance trust and cooperation between the heads of Arab local authorities and police personnel at local police stations. This should include adopting internal and external working procedures to maintain relations during personnel changes in the local authority or at the police station.
- 9 Refrain from the mass allocation of firearms licenses and carefully supervise the proper maintenance and storage of firearms of the proper maintenance and storage of firearms to prevent theft and seepage of firearms into the criminal world.
- 10 Enhance police security for public representatives and municipal candidates in places where there is a clear threat, ahead of the local elections.